DRAFT

CMGT 537
Video Games: Content, Industry & Policy
USC Annenberg School for Communication

Professor Dmitri Williams
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ANN room TBD
Class hours: 12-1:50, MW
Office hours following class and/or by appointment.
Office: ANN 414K

Course Description

Video games are now one of the major sectors of the entertainment industry, having surpassed the film industry in receipts. However, video games are having a cultural impact far beyond their role as an economic commodity. In this class, we will explore all of these dynamics, studying the history of videogames, the present industry landscape, their social and cultural impact, and developments in technology, design, and industry organization. There is a strong emphasis on the industry itself—business models, competition, changes in technology, ect. In-class sessions (and evaluations) stress student participation and involvement.

Texts and Supplies:

Most readings will be posted on Blackboard. Also required is "Replay" by Tristan Donovan (2010). It's available on Amazon new ($20) or used ($8+) or by Kindle ($5), and should be available at the Bookstore as well.

All students are required to subscribe to the daily email feed from http://www.gamesindustry.biz and www.gamasutra.com. Optional feeds that may be useful are:
- For mobile issues, especially around marketing, weekly email from Mobiledevmemo: http://mobiledevmemo.com/newsletter/
- VentureBeat's games weekly, primarily stuff from leading journalist Dean Takahashi: http://venturebeat.com/newsletters/
- On the research side, the Gamesnetwork listserv: https://listserv.uta.fi/cgi-bin/wa?A0=GAMESNETWORK

Grade breakdown:

Short assignments	20%
Midterm 1	20%
Midterm 2	20%
Final Paper	30%
Participation	10%

Short assignments (4x5% each):
1. Group presentations on gender in gaming. You will be assigned to present on a piece of reading material in a small group.
2. Debate. You will be assigned the role of a real-world figure in a debate over gaming legislation restricting minors from buying violent video games. You'll be graded based on your grasp of the material, preparation and how well you represent the person (not your own viewpoints).
3. Two game screenshots. Twice during the term you'll be asked to play a game and send me a screenshot. Once will be for World of Warcraft, where you'll send me a shot of your character at level 5 or higher. The other you will play any verison of Minecraft and send me a shot of your character, wielding a sword, taken underground.
4. A player typology profile of yourself. You will complete the survey at http://survey.ihobo.com/BrainHex/ and write a one-page description of your results and whether or not they seem right to you.

Term project: 30%

Your term project will consist of a 10-15 page paper analyzing some aspect of games. This can be corporate, cultural, social scientific, or another area proposed by the student. Tailor it to your own interests, and to a practical real-world project if you like. Papers based on some kind of empirical data—whether statistical or qualitative—always fare better. The term paper is due Dec. 10 by 5 pm to my email inbox. If you want feedback, you need to give me a hard copy in addition to the emailed copy, plus a return addressed and stamped envelope.

In-class participation: 10%

This is the biggest moving piece in your grade. Informed participation will be the thing that moves you up or down a grade.

Academic Integrity Policy

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the school policies and procedures detailed in the SCampus section titled: "University Student Conduct Code." See especially Appendix A: "Academic Dishonesty Sanction Guidelines." The policies,

procedures, and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty. It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, fabricating data for a project, submitting the same paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone but yourself. If you have questions about any of these matters, confer with the instructor.

Academic Accommodation based on Disability
Any student requesting academic accommodation based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP's phone number is (213) 740-0776.

Stress Management
Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

Sexual Assault Resource Center
The Center for Women & Men and the Sexual Assault Resource Center are one and the same. Student Counseling Services is a separate place that also offers confidential counseling and support groups on a variety of other topics. To schedule an appointment with Student Counseling Services, call (213) 740-7711 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays or visit the Engemann Student Health Center on the University Park Campus.

Important dates
TBD: Midterm I
3/12-19: Spring Break, no classes
TBD: Midterm II
TBD, 2-4 PM. Final paper due, and extra credit session.

Date	Session	Readings	Assignment Due
1/9	Intro	"Spacewar" in Levy, S. (1994). *Hackers: Heroes of the computer revolution*. New York: Penguin Books.	
1/11	History 1	Donovan, Ch. 1-3	
1/16	No class, MLK Day		
1/18	History 2 Screening: 8-Bit Generation: The Commodore Wars	Donovan, Ch. 6-8	
1/23	History 3	Donovan, Ch. 13, 17	
1/25	Industry Economics 1	Kline et al, "Digital Play" Ch. 8, p. 169-192 Nielsen 360 2016 Report	
1/30	Industry Economics 2, F2P business model	Williams, D. (2002). Structure and competition in the U.S. home video game industry. *The International Journal on Media Management, 4*(1), 41-54. Shokrizade (2015). The Top F2P Monetization Tricks (blog post)	
2/1	Analytics, Performance Marketing	Modeling video ad effectiveness on mobile, Seufert, E. (2016) (Mobiledevmemo post)	

2/6	Modern games & eSports Potential guest speaker series with Whalen Rozelle, Riot Games, followed by Guest Speaker Amber Allen of DoubleA Events.	NewZoo eSports report	
2/8	Running an independent studio (Lyle Hall, CEO of Heavy Iron Studios, confirmed)	DFC Brief: Core Gamer DFC Brief: AAA Titles	
2/13	Culture, Politics and Social History I	Glassner, B. (1999). *The culture of fear: Why Americans are afraid of the wrong things*. New York: Basic Books. p. 58-74. Koster, R. (2016) AR is an MMO	
2/15	Culture, Politics and Social History II Screening: *The Lost Arcade* Midterm Review	Herz, J. C. (1997). *Joystick nation*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. Ch. 4, p. 43-59. Williams, D. (2006). A (brief) social history of gaming.	Bring your review questions about the Midterm
2/20	No class, Presidents' Day		
2/22	Midterm #1		
2/27	Player Motivations, Player Types	Sherry, J., Greenberg, B., Lucas, S., & Lachlan, K. (2006). Video game uses and gratifications as predictors of use and game preference.	Typology short assignment
3/1	Social Science frameworks & effects	Barlett, C., Anderson, C., Swing, E. (2008). Video game effects: Confirmed, Suspected, and Speculative. *Simulation & Gaming, 20*.	

		Ferguson, C. (2007) The good, the bad and the ugly: A meta-analytic review of positive and negative effects of violent video games. *Psychiatric Quarterly*. 78, 309-316.	
3/6	Effects, Ratings. VR as case study, Uncanny Valley.	"The Untold Story of Magic Leap, the World's Most Secretive Startup" Kevin Kelly, *WIRED*	Term paper topics due
3/8	Policy & Debate	Policy packet on Blackboard	Prep for debate
3/13 & 3/15	No class, Spring Break		
3/20	Gender, Sexuality & Identity in Games	Donovan, Ch. 21 (Girl Gaming) and Beyond Barbie chapters (you will be assigned only one of these readings) *Optional*: Williams, Martins, Consalvo and Ivory, "The virtual census."	Group presentations
3/22	PR (Mark Van Lommel to guest, not confirmed yet)	3 PR News Stories linked on Blackboard	
3/27	Term paper workshop		Term paper outlines due
3/29	Game Design (Speaker TBD) Review Class	Sellers, M. (2006). Designing the experience of interactive play.	Bring your review questions about the Midterm
4/3	Midterm #2		
4/5	Publishing challenges	TBD	

	(Brandon Hsuing, Riot, not yet confirmed)		
4/10	User Research (Dennis Wixon, confirmed)	TBD	
4/12	Localization or game postmortem (Jesse Houston to guest, not confirmed yet)	TBD	
4/17	Online Issues 1	Donovan Ch. 23 Dibbell, J., A Rape in CyberSpace.	WoW screenshot due via email
4/19	Online Issues 2	Chiarella, T. (2004). The lost boys. *Esquire*. The social side of gaming: How playing online computer games creates online and offline social support. Sabine Trepte, Leonard Reinecke, Keno Juechems. Computers in Human Behavior 28 (2012) 832–839	Minecraft screenshot due via email
4/24	Online Issues 3	"Murder Incorporated" handout	
4/26	Last class: Course recap Game challenge and final boss battle		If you want written feedback on your term paper, bring an SASE to class
5/3	Term papers due by email by 5pm		

- Gamification:
  http://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_gaming_can_make_a_better_world
  Reality is Broken chapters